

# **Saltwater Fishing In South Carolina**

## **Marine Resources Act of 2000**

And

Other Marine Fisheries Legislation Passed During the 2000 Legislative Session

**July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001**



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
Marine Resources Division  
Office of Fisheries Management

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# What is the SC Marine Resources Act of 2000?

South Carolina's saltwater fishing and seafood laws are now all wrapped up neatly in a new package. *The Marine Resources Act of 2000* was enacted by the General Assembly in February and signed by Governor Jim Hodges in March.

Four chapters of old laws that evolved over decades have controlled commercial and recreational fishing in Lowcountry creeks, rivers, and ocean waters, but now fishermen can study one set of well organized laws to know how to stay legal.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is responsible for management of fishery and other coastal natural resources and for enforcement of controls set in place by the State legislature. The old laws and regulations have often been inadequate, ambiguous, or unenforceable, and cluttered with unnecessary or conflicting parts.

The Department prepared the rewrite of laws for the General Assembly to consolidate, organize, and improve fishing license requirements, fish size and catch limits, authorities of the Department, controls on aquaculture and seafood, shrimp trawling laws, crab and shellfish fishermen rules, and many other allowances and restrictions on fishermen. In doing so, it held on to the controls that were already effective. Included also are important improvements in law enforcement authority, oversight by magistrates, and appropriate penalties for violation of conservation laws.

DNR involved the fishing public and seafood businesses in its four years of developing the new laws and believes it has met its goal of producing a more easily read and fisherman friendly set of laws to allow enjoyable and successful saltwater fishing while conserving fisheries resources.

The full text of the Act can be accessed on the State legislature's web site at [www.scstatehouse.net](http://www.scstatehouse.net) and calling up Act number 245. Information can also be obtained at the following numbers:

## TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

<b>SCDNR Office of Fisheries Management.....</b>	<b>(843) 406-4061</b>
Shrimp and Crabs.....	(843) 762-5434
Oysters and Clams.....	(843) 762-5029
Finfish.....	(843) 762-5066
Statistics (Reports).....	(843) 762-5020
State Permitting.....	(843) 762-5049
Shellfish Maps.....	(843) 762-5000, ext. 2027

### SCDNR Coastal Law Enforcement Offices

Charleston.....	(843) 762-5013
Georgetown.....	(843) 546-8523
Port Royal.....	(843) 524-9190

### SCDNR Licensing

Charleston.....	(843) 762-5078
Columbia.....	(803) 734-3833

# License Fees

## For Saltwater Fishing in South Carolina

### General License Information

- For commercial saltwater fishing, a resident is defined as a person who filed a South Carolina income tax form as a resident for the previous calendar year or can provide documentation to the Department proving residency for 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the date of application. An additional form of identification acceptable to the Department must also be presented. Non-residents must obtain a non-resident commercial saltwater license.
- All licenses and permits must be in possession while engaging in activities for which the documents were issued. Licenses are not transferable. Vessels used for commercial purposes must have required commercial equipment licenses on board and must display vessel identification decals provided by the Department.
- All licenses expire on June 30 each year. Permits expire under the terms of the individual permit.
- Saltwater commercial licenses are available at the Charleston, Florence, Conway, and Columbia DNR offices only. Recreational saltwater licenses are available statewide.
- Persons whose privileges are suspended are not eligible to apply, hold, or use DNR licenses or permits.
- Recreational lifetime licenses are available to South Carolina residents only. A person must be a

### License Fees for South Carolina Residents

*Licenses are effective July 1 through June 30 of the following year.*

#### COMMERCIAL

Commercial Saltwater License .....	\$25
Wholesale Seafood Dealer .....	\$100
Bait Dealer .....	\$25
Peeler Crab License	
(must also have a Wholesale Dealer License).....	\$ 75
Shellfish Dealer (must also have a Wholesale Dealer License) .....	\$ 10
Shellfish Harvester (required to harvest from state grounds) .....	\$ 75
<b>Equipment licenses:</b>	
Trawls .....	\$125
Traps (up to 50) .....	\$ 25
Each additional trap .....	\$ 1
Channel Net .....	\$250
Gill net for:	
1) Shad, herring, or sturgeon .....	\$10/100 yards or fraction thereof
2) Any other gill net .....	\$10/100 feet or fraction thereof
Haul Seine .....	\$10/100 feet or fraction thereof
Handheld equipment for shellfish (rakes, tongs, forks) .....	No charge
Drag Dredge .....	\$ 75
Other mechanically operated or boat-assisted equipment .....	\$125
Trotlines .....	\$ 10
Any other commercial equipment .....	\$ 10 per type
State Bottoms card .....	No charge
Culture Permit card .....	No charge
Boat Decals .....	No charge

#### RECREATIONAL

Saltwater Fishing License (required to fish for marine finfish from a boat or to harvest oysters or clams) .....	\$5.50
Shrimp Baiting License .....	\$ 25

domiciled resident of South Carolina for a period of 180 consecutive days or more immediately prior to the date of his application for licenses.

- A copy of a South Carolina driver's license or reasonable proof of residency must accompany application. Non-resident lifetime licenses are not available, but all lifetime licenses remain valid if the holder moves out of state.

- **Gratis over 65 License** – any person who has been a domiciled resident for at least six months and is age 65 or older may obtain a free license valid for recreational saltwater fishing.

- **Disability License** – any person who has been a domiciled resident for at least one year and who is certified to be totally disabled by Social Security Administration, SC State Retirement System, US Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Federal Civil Service, Railroad Retirement Board, or Medicaid Assistance, may obtain a license valid for recreational saltwater fishing. This license is valid for three years and disability recertification is required for renewal.

- **Military personnel** *who are residents* of South Carolina stationed outside of the state, shall upon presentation of official furlough or leave papers, be allowed to fish recreationally without purchasing a saltwater fishing license.

- **Youth requirements** – no child under 16 years of age is required to procure a saltwater fishing license unless he/she engages in the taking of fish for commercial purposes.

- **Shrimp baiting licenses are re-quired for all age groups participating in that activity.**

## License Fees for Non-residents

### COMMERCIAL

Commercial Saltwater License .....	\$300
Wholesale Seafood Dealer .....	\$500
Bait Dealer .....	\$125
Peeler Crab License (must also have a Wholesale Dealer License) .....	\$375
Shellfish Dealer (must also have a Wholesale Dealer License) .....	\$ 50
Shellfish Harvester (required to harvest from state grounds) .....	\$375
<b>Equipment licenses:</b>	
Trawls .....	\$300
Traps (up to 50) .....	\$125
Each additional trap .....	\$ 5
Gill net for:	
1) Shad, herring, or sturgeon .....	\$50/100 yards or fraction thereof
2) Any other gill net .....	\$50/100 feet or fraction thereof
Haul Seine .....	\$50/100 feet or fraction thereof
Handheld equipment for shellfish (rakes, tongs, forks) .....	No charge
Drag Dredge .....	\$375
Other mechanically operated or boat-assisted equipment .....	\$625
Trotlines .....	\$ 50
Any other commercial equipment .....	\$50 per type
State Bottoms card .....	No charge
Culture Permit card .....	No charge
Boat Decals .....	No charge

### RECREATIONAL

Saltwater Fishing License (required to fish for marine finfish from a boat or to harvest oysters or clams) .....	\$5.50
Shrimp Baiting License .....	\$500

### *For more information, contact:*

SCDNR Licensing Office  
Marine Resources Division  
P.O. Box 12559  
Charleston SC 29422-2559

Or call:  
**(843) 762-5078**

# Point System

- Points must be assigned under either a commercial category or recreational category. Points may be assigned under only one point category. All points received prior to July 1, 2000 will be assigned under the 'commercial category' and remain effective for the time prescribed by law.

- Any person who accumulates 18 or more points will have all related privileges and licenses suspended for one year. Privileges related to the commercial point category are any and all commercial saltwater fishing licenses, equipment licenses, and bait dealer license. Privileges related to the recreational point category are marine recreational fishing license, pier license, charter boat license, shrimp baiting license, and any other saltwater licenses utilized for recreational purposes.

- For each 12 month period that a person does not receive points, the Department will deduct one-half of the accumulated points in each category if the number of points is greater than three. If the accumulated points are three or less, the point total will be reduced to zero.

## COASTAL FISHERIES POINT SYSTEM

1) Failure to keep records or make reports required by law, permit, or regulation.....	4
2) Violations of laws pertaining to crab size limits or sponge crabs.....	4
3) Violations of a section of Title 50 pertaining to saltwater privileges not mentioned specifically in this section.....	6
4) Taking, attempting to take, or possessing fish, shellfish, or crustaceans in an unlawful manner, in unlawful or closed areas including areas closed by the Department of Health and Environmental Control, during unlawful hours, or during the closed season for the activity, except trawling violations.....	8
5) Selling or offering for sale fish, shellfish, crustaceans, or other seafood or marine products without a proper license.....	8
6) Unlawfully buying fish, shellfish, crustaceans, or other seafood or marine products.....	8
7) Trawling inside the General Trawling Zone other than in restricted areas:	
a) More than one-quarter nautical mile during the closed season.....	10
b) More than one-quarter nautical at a time more than 10 minutes before daily opening or 10 minutes after daily closing times during the open season.....	10
8) Trawling in a restricted area during closed season.....	10
9) Trawling outside the General Trawling Zone:	
a) 100 yards or less distance from the nearest point of the General Trawling Zone during the open season.....	10
b) More than 100 yards distance from the nearest point of the General Trawling Zone during the open season.....	18
c) During the closed season.....	18
10) Taking or attempting to take fish, shellfish, or crustaceans for a commercial purpose without a proper license, permit, or stamp.....	10
11) Failure of the captain or crew of a boat to cooperate with an enforcement officer.....	18
12) Channel netting in an area closed to channel netting or during closed season for channel netting.....	18
13) Applying for or obtaining any resident license using a falsified application or supporting documentation or simultaneously possessing any currently valid SC resident license as provided in this chapter while possessing any resident license from another state.....	18

# Shrimping In South Carolina

## COMMERCIAL

**Trawling** – fishing with a net with a stretch mesh size of less than 2 ½”, other than a haul seine, towed behind a boat

- No person under 16 years old may operate a trawler as master.
- All vessels must display current identification decals provided by the Department.
- The master of a vessel engaged in commercial trawling is responsible for accurately determining the position of his vessel in order that he not violate closed or restricted areas.
- Trawling within ½ nautical mile of a public fishing pier is prohibited.
- Disposal of trawl bycatch is prohibited within ½ nautical mile of any Atlantic Ocean beach.
- General Trawl Zones maps may be obtained by calling (843) 762-5434 or (843) 762-5078.
- Legal trawling times and seasons in the General Trawling Zone are set by the Department.
- Night trawling is illegal in the General Trawling Zone. Closed times are as follows:
  - From April 1 through August 31, inclusive: 9 PM to 5 AM the following day, local time
  - From September 1 through October 31, inclusive: 8 PM to 6 AM the following day, local time
  - From November 1 through March 31, inclusive: 7 PM to 6 AM the following day, local time
- Night trawling for fish may be authorized under permit from the Department.
- Vessels cannot trawl with nets exceeding a total foot rope length of 220 feet. This does not include try nets and properly stored nets.
- During seasons set for shrimp, the operator of a trawler may take and market lawful sized blue crabs taken during the normal shrimp trawling process.
- Turtle excluder devices that meet federal regulations must be used in the saltwaters of this State. (see page 24 for TED specifications)
- Any trawl with any webbing less than 2 ½” stretched mesh and with a head rope exceeding 16 feet must contain one or more properly installed Department-approved bycatch reduction devices (BRDs). (see page 24) When underway, this applies to nets attached to trawl doors. When moored at a dock or anchored, this applies to nets attached to trawl doors or nets hung in the rigging.
- No trawler may have a cast net or other recreational shrimping gear aboard from December 16 through April 30.
- No wholesale dealer, owner or master of a trawler, person holding a channel net license, or person licensed to use a cast net for commercial purposes may obtain a shrimp baiting license.

For information on **Turtle Excluder Devices**, see page 24 or call:  
National Marine Fisheries Service **1-727-570-5312**

For information on **DNR-approved BRDs**, see page 24 or call:  
**1-843-762-5434 or 1-843-762-5000, ext. 2034**



**Channel Nets** – any conical-shaped, fixed, or stationary net used for taking shrimp that is attached to poles, stakes, anchors, buoys, or other fixed objects that has a mesh size less than 2 ½” stretched mesh. The width across the mouth, measured at the float or head line, may not exceed 80 feet.

- No person under 16 years old may hold a channel net license.
- Sixty licenses will be issued each year. Applicants who held licenses the previous year and who have no violations will be given preference.
- Only residents of South Carolina may hold a channel net license.
- Only one license may be issued to a person.
- Channel net season shall be no longer than 90 days and the Department may set that season between September 1 and December 15, inclusive.
- It is unlawful to have a channel net aboard a boat during closed channel net season or to have an unlicensed channel net aboard a boat.
- Each channel net must be marked with an international orange buoy at least 40” in circumference. The buoy must be visible at all times above the water’s surface and must have the owner’s name, address, and license number on it.
- At night, each channel net must be marked by a white light clearly visible ¼ nautical mile away.
- The licensed owner of the channel net must be present and have his license in possession for any net to be set or catch retrieved.
- Hard or soft TEDs must be used in channel nets set west of a line in Winyah Bay from the front range on Big Marsh Island, running SE to day marker #18, then running SSE to red nun buoy #16. TEDs are not required in North Santee Bay. (see page 24 for TED specifications)
- No channel net may be set within 200 feet of another channel net. No channel net may be set within 400 feet of the centerline of a marked navigation channel.
- Lines, buoys, and anchors may be set no earlier than 3 days before the opening of channel net season and must be removed within 3 days following the close of channel net season.

## RECREATIONAL

### **WITHOUT BAIT**

- Legal gear includes cast nets, drop nets, or shrimp seines. Shrimp seines may not be anchored and must have a mesh size of at least 1” stretched mesh but no larger than 1 ¾”. Shrimp seines may be no longer than 40 feet or deeper than 6 feet. Mechanical power may not be used to move the seine through the water.
- Effective **July 1, 2003**, tail bags will no longer be allowed in shrimp seines.
- Catch limit is 48 quarts of whole shrimp or 29 quarts of headed shrimp per boat or person if no boat is used. When a shrimp seine is being used, one limit is allowed a day among the people using the seine.
- From May 1 through December 15, no person may have more than 48 quarts of whole shrimp or 29 quarts of headed shrimp on the water or lands immediately adjacent to the waters of this State. From December 16 through April 30, no person may have more than 12 dozen live or dead shrimp on the waters of this State. When a boat is being used to catch these shrimp, only one limit is allowed among the people on that boat.
- Licensed charter vessels may have no more than 25 dozen live or dead shrimp between December 16 and April 30.



## WITH BAIT

- Between September 1 and November 15, the Department shall establish a 60-day season for taking shrimp over bait with a cast net.
- A shrimp baiting license is required, along with associated tags. The license must be in possession of the person while shrimping over bait. Licenses and tags may not be loaned, borrowed, or exchanged with another person.
- Each bait deposit must be marked by a pole up to 1" in diameter, driven into the ground, that has a Department issued tag attached to it. In addition, each pole must be marked with reflective tape.
- 10 poles per boat per day are allowed. Additional boats in tow may not be used to increase the daily pole limit. If no boat is used, 10 poles per person per day are allowed. No pole or poles may be left unattended.
- The distance between the first and the last pole may not exceed 100 yards. The minimum distance between sets of poles is at least 25 yards. Licensees may only fish those poles with tag numbers corresponding to their license number.
- No poles may be set within 50 yards of a dock or a public landing or boat ramp.
- The owner of a private dock or anyone with his written permission may take shrimp over bait from the dock as long as the Department-issued tag is clearly displayed on the dock.
- Catch limit is 48 quarts of whole shrimp or 29 quarts of headed shrimp per set of poles per day. Possession limit is 96 quarts of whole shrimp or 58 quarts of headed shrimp while not in the waters or on lands immediately adjacent to the waters unless a bill of lading or receipt shows that the shrimp were purchased from a licensed retail or wholesale dealer.
- Effective **July 1, 2002**, no cast net can be used with a mesh size smaller than ½" square.



# Crabbing

## In South Carolina

### General Information

- Other than traps attached to a shore-based structure, each trap set in the water must have a buoy made of solid material which does not sink if punctured or cracked.
- Spherical buoys must be at least 6" in diameter. Non-spherical buoys must be at least 10" long and 5" in width or diameter.
- No plastic, metal, or glass bottles or jugs may be used as a buoy. No floating line may be used.
- No trap may be placed within 600 feet of a public boat ramp. No trap may be set within 600 feet of a public fishing pier or man-made jetty with a public fishing walkway.
- No part of any trap can be dry at any stage of the tide.
- No trap can be unattended for more than 5 days. Without written permission from the owner, no other person may take the catch from any trap. Even with written permission, any person pulling or fishing a commercial pot licensed to another person must be properly licensed as a saltwater commercial fisherman.
- No trap may be set so it obstructs navigation of navigable water courses, moorings, or access points.
- No crab smaller than 5" across (tip of lateral spine to tip of opposite lateral spine) may be kept and must be returned immediately to the water.

### COMMERCIAL

- From June 1 through March 14, all traps must have at least 2 unobstructed, circular escape rings. Each must be at least 2 3/8" inside diameter. At least one ring must be in the upper chamber. Rings in the upper chamber must be within 2" of the base of the horizontal partition; rings in the lower chamber must be within 2" of the base of the trap.
- Traps with a single chamber must have at least one 2 3/8" or larger inside diameter ring located on a vertical surface within 2" of the base of the trap.
- Peeler traps which are constructed of 1" mesh wire and baited only with live male blue crabs are exempt year-round from escape ring requirements.
- Each commercial saltwater fisherman licensed to fish traps must acquire an identification number assigned by the Department. This number must be burned or branded on each primary trap buoy. The numerals must be at least 2" high in a color contrasting with the buoy. The numerals must be clearly legible and unobstructed and visible when the buoy is in the water.
- No traps may be set, moved, or fished and no vessel may transport more than 24 crabs or crab parts:
  - 1) Between 9 PM and 5 AM the following day, local time, from April 1 through September 15
  - 2) Between 7 PM and 6 AM the following day, local time, from September 16 through March 31.
- A vessel used to take or harvest blue crabs must display the crab trap identification number on the port and starboard sides of the hull near midships. The letters or numbers must contrast with the hull and be at least 8" high and 6" wide. An unobstructed circle at least 8" high consisting of one or two colors, except black and yellow, must be displayed next to the identification numbers. These colors must match the color or color combination on the trap buoys being used. If two colors are used, each must cover 1/2 of the circle.
- No person may hold more than one crab pot license.
- Traps may not be set for commercial purposes between May 1 and October 1 within Pawleys Island Creek and Midway Creek in Georgetown County.

- No sponge crabs may be kept and must be returned immediately to the water. Licensed wholesale dealers who hold a permit from the Department may possess sponge crabs from states where their taking and selling are lawful.
- Only the larger claw of a stone crab may be taken but only if it is at least 2 ¾" long. The measurement is a straight line from the elbow to the tip of the lower immovable claw.
- No claw may be removed from a female stone crab bearing visible eggs. It is unlawful to remove visible eggs from a female stone crab.
- Horseshoe crabs may only be taken by permit from the Department.

### **OFM Permitting Office**

**1-843-762-5049**

- Harvest and transport of peeler crabs less than 5" carapace width by a licensed commercial saltwater fisherman is permitted with written acknowledgement from a licensed peeler crab dealer stating that the dealer will accept crabs from that fisherman. The acknowledgement must be dated and is not valid 90 days from that date.
- Licensed wholesale dealers may import sublegal crabs under permit from the Department. Bills of sale or other documentation must accompany each shipment and be dated no earlier than three days before the shipment.
- Clam mariculture operations may capture and transport blue crabs and stone crabs of any size under permit from the Department. All stone crabs and sublegal blue crabs must be released alive in water of comparable salinity. If more than 2 traps are used for capture, the permittee must be a licensed saltwater commercial fisherman and purchase the proper gear license.

### **Trawling**

- Season: Department may annually set the season between December 1 through March 31 of the following year.
- During the season set for shrimp trawling, shrimp trawlers may take and market lawful size blue crabs.
- It is unlawful to trawl for crabs with equipment (trawls) with a mesh size less than 4" stretched mesh. Chafing gear of any sort must not be more than ½ the circumference of the tail bag.
- Permits from the Department are required to trawl for crabs, except for vessels lawfully engaged in shrimp trawling.
- Vessels rigged to use a licensed trawl may have more than 24 crabs aboard at night if taken during lawful trawling activity but such vessels may not be used to set, move, or retrieve catch from crab traps.

### **RECREATIONAL**

- No more than 2 crab traps per person.
- Each trap must be marked with a yellow buoy marked with the owner's name and current address or must be affixed to a structure affixed to the shore. (See General Information, page 8 for buoy specifications)

# Clamming and Oystering

## In South Carolina

### General Information

- Season is set by the Department between September 16 through May 15 of the following year, inclusive.
- It is unlawful to take shellfish from any grounds closed by the Department or any other authorized government agency. The Department may open or close any area at any time during the year when biological or other conditions warrant.
- It is unlawful to harvest shellfish between ½ hour after sunset and ½ hour before sunrise.
- Clams must be at least 1" thick, measured from the surface of one shell to the surface of the other shell. With a permit, mariculture operations may possess clams less than 1" thick. Licensed wholesale dealers may purchase clams from permitted mariculture operations.
- No shellfish imported into this State may be placed in the waters of this State except by special permit.
- Without Department approval, it is unlawful for any person to erect or maintain signs on state shellfish bottoms or waters.

**OFM Permitting Office**

**1-843-762-5049**

### COMMERCIAL

- Persons taking clams or oysters from bottoms designated for commercial harvest must possess an individual harvesting permit if they harvest more than the recreational limit or harvest for commercial purposes. In order to obtain an individual harvesting permit, a person must be a licensed saltwater commercial fisherman and hold the proper equipment licenses.
- The Department may limit the number of areas that a person may be permitted to harvest.
- Permits may be granted to residents for exclusive use of intertidal or subtidal bottoms for commercial shellfish culture or mariculture. No more than 500 acres of bottoms or an aggregate of 100 surface acres of water may be permitted to any entity. Permits are valid for 5 years and may be renewed. Written applications for permits must be made on forms provided by the Department, and a non-refundable sum of \$25 must accompany each application. Upon conditional approval of the permit, the applicant must publish a notice advising all interested parties that a Shellfish Culture Permit or Mariculture Permit has been applied for with specific descriptions of bottoms or waters. The notice must be published once a week for 3 consecutive weeks in a general circulation newspaper in the county of the proposed permit.
- Annual fees of \$5/acre of bottoms producing or capable of producing or \$5/acre of water surface or both will be charged, depending on the permit. All fees are due by March 1. If fees are not paid by April 1, the permit is void.
- Each culture permittee must plant 50 bushels of shell, seed oysters, seed clams, or approved culch for each acre of bottoms each year. Shell and other culch planting must be done between May 1 and August 31, inclusive. Green oyster shell may be planted from current operations if replanting occurs within 3 days after gathering. Seed oysters and clams may be planted any time of year.
- To use mechanically operated devices, including dredges, hydraulic escalators, patent tongs, hoists, cranes, and mechanical shellfish harvesters, a person must obtain a mechanical harvest permit.
- Persons permitted to harvest shellfish for commercial purposes from state-owned bottoms must harvest for any purpose only from those areas specified on the permit.

## RECREATIONAL

- Public shellfish grounds are designated where persons holding a marine recreational fishing license or those who are exempt from holding this license (see page 3) may gather clams or oysters for personal use.
- Personal limit:
  - 1) Two bushels of oysters per license holder per day
  - 2) ½ bushel of clams per license holder per day
  - 3) In any 7 day period, no person can gather shellfish more than two days.
  - 4) Regardless of the number of persons, there is a possession limit of 3 personal limits per boat or vehicle or combination of boat and vehicle.
- To possess more than the daily limit, a person must hold the required commercial licenses and permits or have received properly tagged shellfish from a licensed, certified wholesale seafood dealer.

**For maps of public shellfish grounds, contact the Shellfish Management Section of the Office of Fisheries Management at (843) 762- 5000, ext. 2027.**



# Fishing

## In South Carolina

*This section pertains to fishing for saltwater fish other than shad and herring. For shad and herring laws, see page 19 - 21.*

### COMMERCIAL GEAR AND LICENSES

**Licenses:** See page 2 .

**Haul Seines:**

- Haul seines may be made of twine no smaller than #9 with stretched mesh no smaller than 2" and no larger than 2 7/8".
- Haul seines greater than 100 feet must be marked with international orange buoys at least 20" in diameter that are clearly visible at all times. The buoys must be attached to the float line every 300 feet and there must be a buoy at each end of the seine.
- No haul seine may be set within 500 yards of any public fishing pier.
- A haul seine must be fully returned to the beach every 1 ½ hours.

**Gill Nets:**

- Gill nets must have at least one international orange end buoy that shows the name and license number of the owner.
- The owner of a gill net must be within 500 feet of the net and maintain visual contact at all times.
- In inshore saltwater areas designated by the Department, gill nets may be up to 100 yards long with a mesh size at least 3" stretched mesh up to 5 ½" stretched mesh. In the Atlantic Ocean, gill nets may be up to 100 feet long with mesh size at least 3" stretched mesh up to, but not including, 4 ½" stretched mesh.
- No net, including line and attached devices, may extend more than ½ the width of any creek or channel regardless of the stage of tide or river stage.
- No net may be set within 600 feet of any other net or device for taking fish except traps.

**Trotlines:**

- Trotlines in inshore saltwaters must have at least one international orange end buoy with the name and license number of the owner on it. Trotlines in the ocean must be marked with an international orange buoy at least 20" in diameter on each end of the line. The buoys must be clearly visible at all times.
- No fishing equipment may be set within 600 feet of a public fishing pier or a man-made jetty with a fishing walkway.
- Seines or gill nets are prohibited in lagoons, impoundments, and lakes in state parks.
- It is unlawful to use a boat within 300 feet of any public fishing pier in the Atlantic Ocean.
- Spotted sea trout (winter trout), red drum (channel bass), tarpon, and any billfish from the family *Istiophoridae* are saltwater gamefish. It is illegal to possess saltwater gamefish while fishing or transporting seines, gill nets, or other commercial gear. Saltwater gamefish taken in these gears must be returned to the water immediately.

## RECREATIONAL GEAR AND LICENSES

- Fishing means to catch, take, land or harvest saltwater fish or attempt to do the same. Saltwater fish includes all species of finfish, oysters, and clams.
- No person 16 years old or older may fish for recreation without a saltwater recreational fishing license seaward of the freshwater/saltwater dividing line except:
  - Someone fishing from a public fishing pier with a valid pier license or
  - Someone fishing from a licensed charter vessel or
  - Someone using hook and line from the shore or a shore-based structure
  - Properly licensed shrimp baiters and those assisting a properly licensed shrimp baiter
- Hook and Line – if fishing from a boat, you must have a recreational saltwater fishing license or be on a licensed charter vessel.
- Cast nets
- Up to two trotlines with a cumulative total of 50 hooks or baits or less. Trotlines in inshore waters must have at least one international orange end buoy with the name and address of the owner on it. Trotlines in the ocean must be marked with an international orange buoy at least 20” in diameter on each end of the line. The buoys must be clearly visible at all times.
- Up to ten bush or pole lines with single hooks or baits.
- Gill nets:
  - Gill nets must have at least one international orange end buoy that shows the name and license number of the owner.
  - The owner of a gill net must be within 500 feet of the net and maintain visual contact at all times.
  - In inshore saltwaters, gill nets may be up to 100 yards long with a mesh size at least 3” stretched mesh up to 5 ½” stretched mesh. In the Atlantic Ocean, gill nets may be up to 100 feet long with mesh size at least 3” stretched mesh up to, but not including, 4 ½” stretched mesh.
  - No net, including line and attached devices, may extend more than ½ the width of any creek or channel regardless of the stage of tide or river stage.
  - No net may be set within 600 feet of any other net or device for taking fish except traps.
- No one may retrieve recreational gear unless the owner is present. A person may retrieve gear with the written permission of the owner but no fish can be kept.
- No fishing equipment may be set within 600 feet of a public fishing pier or a man-made jetty with a fishing walkway.
- Seines or gill nets are prohibited in lagoons, impoundments, and lakes in state parks.
- It is unlawful to use a boat within 300 feet of any public fishing pier in the Atlantic Ocean.
- Poison, explosives, or bangsticks may not be used in state waters.



# Recreational Size and Catch Limits for Saltwater Fish

TL = Total Length; FL = Fork Length  
AIW = Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway

**State Waters** extend from the saltwater/freshwater dividing line to the 3-mile limit.  
**Federal Waters** extend from the 3-mile limit to 200 miles offshore (international waters).

All species in this section must be landed with head and tail intact.

**\*\*Note: Fishery Regulations are subject to change.\*\***

## Sport Fish

### Channel Bass(Red Drum/Spottail)

**Limit:** 5 per person per day (state waters)

**Size:** 14-inch minimum (TL) and 27-inch maximum (TL)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- May be taken only by rod & reel year-round or by gigging March through November.
- May not be harvested from federal waters. South Carolina native caught fish may not be sold (state waters).

### Spotted Seatrout

**Limit:** 10 per person per day (state waters)

**Size:** 13-inch minimum (TL) (state waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- May be taken only by rod & reel year-round or by gigging March through November.
- South Carolina native caught fish may not be sold (state waters).

### Flounders (Southern & Summer)

**Limit:** Rod & reel or gigging only – 20 per person per day (state waters)

**Size:** 12-inch minimum (TL) (state waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

Size limits apply to both recreational & commercial fishing.

### Striped Bass

**Limit:** 10 per person per day **except** 5 per day in Wando & Cooper Rivers and Santee River downstream to the AIW.

**Size:** None in saltwaters, **except** 21-inch minimum in the Wando & Cooper Rivers and Santee River above the AIW.

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- May be taken by rod & reel year-round & may not be sold (state waters).
- Unlawful to take or attempt to take in saltwaters of the Savannah River.

### King Mackerel

**Limit:** 3 per person per day (state & federal waters)

**Size:** 24-inch minimum (FL)(state & federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Federal commercial mackerel permit needed to exceed catch limit.
- January 1 to December 31, fishery may be closed to all harvest if total allowable catch is exceeded (state & federal waters).

### Spanish Mackerel

**Limit:** 15 per person per day (state & federal waters)

**Size:** 12-inch minimum (FL) (state & federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Federal commercial mackerel permit needed to exceed catch limit.
- January 1 to December 31, fishery may be closed to all harvest if total allowable catch is exceeded (state & federal waters).

### Bluefish

**Limit:** 10 per person per day (state & federal waters)

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- No closed season

### Cobia

**Limit:** 2 per day (state & federal waters)

**Size:** 33-inch minimum (FL) (state & federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- No closed season
- Federal commercial mackerel permit needed to exceed catch limit.

### Tarpon

**Limit:** 1 per person per day (state waters)

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- May be taken only by rod & reel & may not be sold.

### Greater Amberjack

**Limit:** 1 per person per day (state & federal waters)

**Size:** 28-inch minimum (FL)(state & federal waters), coring is prohibited

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Commercial harvest restrictions during April. Prohibits sale of fish harvested under bag limit when season is closed.

## Sheepshead, Spadefish

**Catch Limit:** No more than 20 per person per day in aggregate with the snapper grouper complex species listed on page 15.

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Bluerunners and tomtates are excluded from the aggregate bag limit.

## Dolphin

**Limit:** 7 per person or 26 per boat per day (state waters); headboats may have up to 50 per boat per day

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:** None

## Atlantic Tunas

### Yellowfin Tuna

**Limit:** 3 per person per day

**Size:** 27-inch minimum body curve (FL) (federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Federal permit required.

### Bigeye, Bluefin Tuna

**Limit:** Check current Federal Regulations by calling 1-888-USA-TUNA

**Size:** 27-inch minimum (FL) (federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Federal permit required.

### Albacore, Skipjack

**Limit:** None

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Federal permit required.

## Porgies & Snappers

### Red Porgy

**Limit:** 1 per person per day

**Size:** 14-inch minimum (TL)

### Vermilion Snapper

**Limit:** 10 per person per day (state & federal waters)

**Size:** 11-inch minimum (TL)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- No closed season

## Recreational Size and Catch Limits (con't.)

### Other Snappers (Except Vermilion)

Red Snapper	20-inch minimum TL No closed season
Lane Snapper	8-inch minimum TL No closed season
Black Snapper	No size limit No closed season
Blackfin, Cubera, Dog, Yellowtail, Gray, Mahogany, Silk, Schoolmaster & Queen Snapper	12-inch minimum TL No closed season
Mutton Snapper	16-inch minimum TL No closed season

#### Limit:

- 10 per person per day from this group (including all snapper species except Vermilion), and no more than 2 Red Snapper may be included in the total (state & federal waters).

### Hogfish

**Limit:** None

**Size:** 12-inch minimum (FL) (state & federal waters)

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- No closed season

## Sea Bass, Grouper & Tilefish

### Black Sea Bass

**Limit:** 20 per person per day

**Size:** 10-inch minimum (TL) (state & federal waters)

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- No closed season

### Grouper Tilefish Combinations

Gag & Black Grouper	24-inch minimum TL <i>See Restrictions</i>
Scamp, Red, Yellowfin & Yellowmouth Groupers	20-inch minimum TL No closed season
Golden Tilefish	No size limit
Sand Tilefish	No closed season
Blueline Tilefish	

**Limits:** 5 per person per day from this group, and no more than 2 Gag or Black Groupers may be included in the total (state & federal waters)

**Restrictions:** Purchase and sale of Gag or Black Grouper is prohibited during March and April.

### Warsaw, Speckled Hind

**Limit:** 1 warsaw and 1 speckled hind per boat per day

**Size:** No size limit

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- No closed season
- Purchase and/or sale is prohibited.

### Nassau Grouper, Jewfish

**Limit:** Possession is prohibited

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- No open season

### All Other Snapper Grouper Complex Species Combined

**Species:** Including but not limited to:

Gray, Queen and Ocean Triggerfish; Whitebone, Knobbed, Jolthead, Saucereye, Grass and Longspine Porgies; Scup, Sheepshead, Almaco, Bar, Crevalle, and Yellow Jacks; Lesser Amberjack; Banded Rudderfish; Bluespotted, White, Smallmouth, French and Spanish Grunts; Black Margate; Margate; Porkfish; Cottonwick; Sailors Choice; Spadefish; Puddingwife; Bank Sea Bass; Rock Sea Bass

**Limit:** 20 fish aggregate per person per day from this group

**Size:** No size limit

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- Bluerunners and tomtates are excluded from the aggregate bag limit.
- No closed season

## Billfish

### Blue Marlin

**Size:** 99-inch minimum body curve (FL) (state & federal waters)

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- May be taken only by rod & reel and may not be sold.

### White Marlin

**Size:** 66-inch minimum body curve (FL) (state & federal waters)

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- May be taken only by rod & reel and may not be sold.

### Sailfish

**Size:** 63-inch minimum body curve (FL) (state & federal waters)

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- May be taken only by rod & reel and may not be sold.

## Sturgeon & Shad

### Shortnose Sturgeon

**Limit:** Possession is prohibited

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- Unlawful to catch, buy, sell or ship. Classified as an endangered species.

### Atlantic Sturgeon

**Limit:** Possession is prohibited (state waters)

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- No open season until further notice. Unlawful to catch, buy, sell or ship.

### American Shad, Herring

#### Limit:

- 10 shad per person per day, except Santee River, 20 shad per person per day
- 1 US bushel of herring per person per day.

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- No closed season for recreational fishing with hook & line, including rod & reel.
- A person must have a fresh water fishing license to take shad or herring by hook and line or cast net in the freshwaters of this state. In saltwaters, a person must have a recreational saltwater license to take shad or herring by hook and line from a boat.
- No shad or herring taken by hook and line or cast net may be sold.

## Sharks

#### Seasons/Restrictions:

- Unlawful to gill net for sharks in state waters and all sharks taken by gill net must be released immediately.

### Dogfish (Spiny & Smooth)

**Limit:** None (state & federal waters)

**Size:** No size limit

### Atlantic Sharpnose

**Limit:** 1 per person per day

**Size:** No size limit

**Call the following numbers for further information on:**

- **Mackerel permits**  
(727) 570-5326
- **Tuna permits**  
1-888-USA-TUNA
- **SC Artificial Reefs**  
(843) 762-5082

## Recreational Size and Catch Limits (con't.)

**Sandbar, Silky, Blacktip, Spinner, Bull, Tiger, Lemon, Nurse, Scalloped Hammerhead, Great Hammerhead, Smooth Hammerhead, Blacknose, Finetooth, Bon-nethead, Shortfin Mako, Thresher, Porbeagle, Oceanic Whitetip and Blue Sharks**

**Limit:** 1 shark per boat per trip from this group.

**Size:** 54-inch minimum (FL)

**Sand Tiger, Bigeye Sand Tiger, Whale, Basking, White, Dusky, Bignose, Galapagos, Night, Caribbean Reef, Narrow-tooth, Caribbean Sharpnose, Smalltail, Atlantic Angel, Longfin Mako, Bigeye Thresher, Sevengill, Sixgill and Bigeye Sixgill Sharks**

**Limit:** Possession is prohibited.

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- No open season. Sharks from this group may not be kept. If caught, sharks from this group must be released immediately.

### Special Information

**Special Management Zones** – The following Artificial Reefs have been declared “Special Management Zones” and are protected by federal regulations: *BP-25, Betsy Ross, Bill Perry, Cape Romain, Caapers, Comanche, Eagles Nest, Edisto Offshore, Fripp Island, Georgetown, Hilton Head, Hunting Island, Kiawah, Little River Offshore, Paradise, Pawley’s Island, Ten Mile, Vermilion and Y-73*. Fishing may be conducted only with hook and line gear and spearfishing gear (excluding powerheads). The use of fish traps, longlines, gill nets, and trawls is prohibited. Powerheads (bangsticks) are prohibited except for safety purposes. It is unlawful to possess, land, or sell any species of fish taken with a bangstick (reef and non-reef areas).

### Saltwater/Freshwater Dividing Line

The dividing line between salt water and fresh water on rivers listed below are defined. All waters of the rivers and their tributaries, streams, and estuaries lying seaward of the dividing lines are considered salt water and all waters lying landward and upstream from the dividing lines are considered fresh water.

- 1) On Savannah River, the abandoned Seaboard Railroad track bed located approximately 1.75 miles upstream from US 17-A bridge.
- 2) Wright River is salt water for its entire length.
- 3) On Ashepoo River, the old Seaboard Railroad track bed.
- 4) On New River, Cooks Landing.
- 5) Wallace River, Rantowles Creek, Long Branch Creek, and Shem Creek are salt water for their entire lengths.
- 6) On Edisto River, the abandoned Seaboard Railroad track bed near Matthews Canal Cut.
- 7) On Ashley River, the confluence of Popper Dam Creek directly across from Magnolia Gardens.
- 8) On Cooper River, the seaward shoreline of Old Back River at the confluence of Old Back River downstream from Bushy Park Reservoir.
- 9) Wando River is salt water for its entire length.
- 10) On the Intracoastal Waterway in Horry County, the bridge across the Intracoastal Waterway at the intersection of SC Highway 9 and US Highway 17.

For all other rivers not listed above, the dividing line is US Highway 17.

**Note:** Shad, herring, and sturgeon are regulated by saltwater laws, even when occurring in freshwaters above the Saltwater/Freshwater Dividing Line.

# Commercial Size and Catch Limits for Saltwater Fish

TL = Total Length; FL = Fork Length  
AIW = Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway

**State Waters** extend from the saltwater/freshwater dividing line to the 3-mile limit.  
**Federal Waters** extend from the 3-mile limit to 200 miles offshore (international waters).

All species in this section must be landed with head and tail intact.

**\*\*Note: Fishery Regulations are subject to change.\*\***

## Inshore Fish

### Flounders (Southern & Summer)

**Limit:** None

**Size:** 12-inch minimum (TL) (state waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:** No closed season

### Shortnose Sturgeon

**Limit:** Possession is prohibited

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Unlawful to catch, buy, sell or ship. Classified as an endangered species.

### Atlantic Sturgeon

**Limit:** Possession is prohibited (state waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:** No open season until further notice. Unlawful to catch, buy, sell or ship.

## Offshore Fish

### King Mackerel

**Limit:** Trip limits and quotas are in place and adjusted annually.

**Size:** 24-inch minimum (FL)(state & federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Federal commercial mackerel permit needed.
- Fishery may be closed to all harvest if total allowable catch is exceeded (state & federal waters).
- Drift gill nets are prohibited.

### Spanish Mackerel

**Limit:** Trip limits and quotas are in place and adjusted annually.

**Size:** 12-inch minimum (FL) (state & federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Federal commercial mackerel permit needed.
- Fishery may be closed to all harvest if total allowable catch is exceeded (state and federal waters).
- Purse seines and drift gill nets are prohibited.
- Possession and sale of cut-off (damaged) king or Spanish mackerel that comply with the minimum size limits and

trip limits will be allowed. This is in addition to the allowable five cut-off king mackerel that do not meet size limits and cannot be sold and are not counted against the trip limit.

### Cobia

**Limit:** 2 per person per day

**Size:** 33-inch minimum (FL) (state & federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- No closed season
- Federal commercial mackerel permit needed.
- Drift gill nets are prohibited.

### Bluefish

**Limit:** Quotas are in place and are adjusted annually.

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Federal bluefish permit needed.

### Greater Amberjack

**Limit:** During April, possession and sale limit of one fish per person per day

**Size:** 36-inch minimum (FL)(state & federal waters), coring is prohibited

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Federal snapper/grouper permit needed.
- Fishery will be closed when quota is reached.

### Dolphin

**Limit:** 4500 pounds per trip landed in South Carolina; state commercial harvest limited to 180,000 pounds on an annual basis

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- State commercial quota of 180,000 pounds per year.

## Atlantic Tunas

### Yellowfin, Bigeye Tuna

**Limit:** None

**Size:** 27-inch minimum curved FL (federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Federal permit required.

### Bluefin Tuna

**Limit:** Check current Federal Regulations by calling 1-888-USA-TUNA

**Size:** Call above number

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Federal permit required.

### Albacore, Skipjack

**Limit:** None

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Federal permit required.

## Porgies & Snappers

### Red Porgy

**Limit:** 50 pounds per trip

**Size:** 14-inch minimum (TL)

**(Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Harvest and possession of Red Porgy is prohibited.

### Vermilion Snapper

**Limit:** 10 per person per day (state & federal waters)

**Size:** 12-inch minimum (TL)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- No closed season

### Red Snapper

**Size:** 20-inch minimum TL

**Seasons/Restrictions:** No closed season

### Lane Snapper, Blackfin, Cubera, Dog, Yellowtail, Gray, Mahogany, Silk, Schoolmaster & Queen

### Snapper

**Size:** 12-inch minimum TL

**Seasons/Restrictions:** No closed season

### Black Snapper

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:** No closed season

### Mutton Snapper

**Size:** 16-inch minimum TL

**Seasons/Restrictions:** During May and June, limit of 10 fish per person per day per trip

### Hogfish

**Limit:** None

**Size:** 12-inch minimum (FL) (state & federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:** No closed season



# Commercial Size and Catch Limits (con't.)

## Black Sea Bass, Groupers & Tilefish

Federal permit is required for commercial harvest. **Note:** Vessels with long-line gear onboard may only possess: Snowy Grouper, Warsaw Grouper (may not sell or trade), Yellowedge Grouper, Misty Grouper, Golden Tilefish, Blue-line Tilefish & Sand Tilefish

### Black Sea Bass

**Limit:** None

**Size:** 10-inch minimum (TL) (state & federal waters)

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- No closed season

### Gag & Black Grouper

**Size:** 24-inch minimum TL

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Purchase and sale of Gag or Black Grouper is prohibited during March and April and possession is limited to the recreational bag limit.

### Scamp, Red, Yellowfin & Yellowmouth Groupers

**Size:** 20-inch minimum TL

**Seasons/Restrictions:** None

### Misty Grouper

**Size:** 12-inch minimum TL

**Seasons/Restrictions:** None

### Snowy Grouper

**Limit:** 2500 pounds per trip when season open; 300 pounds per trip when season closed.

**Size:** No size limit

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Fishery will be closed when quota is met.

### Jewfish, Nassau Grouper

**Limit:** Possession or harvest prohibited.

### Warsaw Grouper

**Limit:** One fish per vessel per trip. No sale or transfer allowed.

### Speckled Hind (Kitty Mitchill)

**Limit:** One fish per vessel per trip. May not be sold or traded.

### All other Hinds

**Size:** None

**Seasons/Restrictions:** None

### Wreckfish

**Size:** None

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Individual Transferable Quota program in place. Fishery closed January 15 – April 15.

## Golden Tilefish

**Size:** None

**Seasons/Restrictions:** 5000 pounds per trip when season open; 300 pounds per trip when season closed. Fishery will be closed when quota is met.

## Sand Tilefish, Blueline Tilefish

**Size:** None

**Seasons/Restrictions:** None

## Sharks

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- Unlawful to gill net for sharks in state waters and all sharks taken by gill net must be released immediately.

### Dogfish (Spiny & Smooth)

**Limit:** Smooth - none (state & federal waters); Spiny – fishery will be closed when quota is met.

**Size:** No size limit

### Atlantic Sharpnose

**Limit:** None

**Size:** No size limit

### Sandbar, Silky, Blacktip, Spinner, Bull, Tiger, Lemon, Nurse, Scalloped Hammerhead, Great Hammerhead, Smooth Hammerhead, Blacknose, Finetooth, Bonnethead, Shortfin Mako, Thresher, Porbeagle, Oceanic Whitetip and Blue Sharks

**Limit:** 4000 pounds per trip

**Size:** None

**Seasons/Restrictions:** Fishery will be closed when quota is met.

### Sand Tiger, Bigeye Sand Tiger, Whale, Basking, White, Dusky, Bignose, Galapagos, Night, Caribbean Reef, Narrow- tooth, Caribbean Sharpnose, Smalltail, Atlantic Angel, Longfin Mako, Bigeye Thresher, Sevengill, Sixgill and Bigeye

## Sixgill Sharks

**Limit:** Possession is prohibited.

**Seasons/Restrictions:**

- No open season. Sharks from this group may not be kept. If caught, sharks from this group must be released immediately.

## Special Information

**Special Management Zones** – The following Artificial Reefs have been declared “Special Management Zones” and are protected by federal regulations: *BP-25, Betsy Ross, Bill Perry, Cape Romain, Capers, Comanche, Eagles Nest, Edisto Offshore, Fripp Island, Georgetown, Hilton Head, Hunting Island, Kiawah, Little River Offshore, Paradise, Pawley’s Island, Ten Mile, Vermilion and Y-73.* Fishing may be conducted only with hook and line gear and spearfishing gear (excluding powerheads). The use of fish traps, longlines, gill nets, and trawls is prohibited. Powerheads (bangsticks) are prohibited except for safety purposes. It is unlawful to possess, land, or sell any species of fish taken with a bangstick (reef and non-reef areas).

**Call the following numbers for information on:**

- **Snapper/grouper**  
(727) 570-5326
- **Tuna**  
1-888-USA-TUNA
- **Highly Migratory Species**  
(727) 570-5447
- **Bluefish**  
(978) 281-9370

**Information over the Internet may be found at the following sites:**

- **General Information:**  
[www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)
- **Tuna permits/information:**  
[www.nmfspermits.com](http://www.nmfspermits.com)
- **Shark quotas/information:**  
[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hmssp.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hmssp.html)
- **Snapper/Grouper info:**  
[www.safmc.noaa.gov](http://www.safmc.noaa.gov)

# Commercial Fishing for Shad & Herring

## General Information

- Shad means American shad (white shad) or hickory shad (skipjack shad). Herring means blueback herring or alewives.
- While using or possessing any commercial equipment, it is illegal to take shad by hook and line.
- It is illegal to possess salt water or fresh water gamefish or fishing tackle for either of these while using shad or herring gill nets. Non-game fish caught in legal shad or herring nets may be kept.
- Atlantic sturgeon caught during closed season for Atlantic sturgeon, all shortnose sturgeon, or any gamefish must be returned to the water immediately.
- It is illegal to set a net in a fixed position in the Intracoastal Waterway.
- Shad gill nets must have at least 5 ½" stretched mesh except as noted for Edisto River. Herring gill nets must have at least 2 ½" stretched mesh.
- In the Atlantic Ocean, shad nets must be freely drift fished. Nets may not be staked, tied to a boat, or anchored. No net may be left unattended. No fisherman may set, fish, possess or have on a boat more than 6000 feet of shad or herring gill netting.
- In inshore salt waters, nets may be anchored or drift fished. No net may be longer than 900 feet. Only one herring net may be drift fished by the occupants of a boat and must be attended at all times.
- In fresh water, nets may be no longer than 600 feet, except nets no more than 900 feet long may

## Commercial Seasons and Times

### SHAD

**Winyah Bay** – includes Black River, Sampit River, Great Pee Dee, Little Pee Dee, Lynches River, Waccamaw River & Winyah Bay

- A. Pee Dee above US Hwy 701, Waccamaw River above entrance of Big Bull Creek, and Black River above County Road 179

Season: February 1 – April 30

Times: Monday noon – Saturday noon

- B. Remainder of Winyah Bay, including Sampit River & Big Bull Creek

Season: February 15 – April 15

Times: Tuesday, 7 AM – Saturday, 7 PM

**Santee River** – includes Rediversion Canal below St. Stephen Dam, North Santee River and Bay, and South Santee River

- A. Rediversion Canal – no open season

- B. Wilson Dam to US Highway 52 – no open season

- C. US Highway 52 to SC Highway 41

Season: February 1 – April 30

Times: 7 AM – 7 PM, Tuesday and Thursday

- D. US Highway 41 seaward

Season: February 1 – March 31

Times: Tuesday noon – Saturday noon

**Charleston Harbor** – includes Wando River & Cooper River to US Highway 17 bridges, Charleston Harbor, and Ashley River

- A. Tailrace Canal from Wadboo Creek to Jefferies Power Plant – no open season

- B. Wadboo Creek to US Highway 17 – no open season

- C. Ashley River to confluence with Popper Dam Creek

Season: February 1 – March 1

Times: Wednesday noon – Saturday noon

- D. Remainder of Charleston Harbor system (includes Wando)

Season: February 1 – March 31

Times: Wednesday noon – Saturday noon

Methods: Drift gill nets only

### Edisto River

- A. Above US Highway 17 bridge

Season: January 15 – April 15

Times: Tuesday noon – Saturday noon

Methods: Until April 15, 2002, shad nets may have stretched mesh of 4 ½" up to 5 ½". After that date, nets may be 5" up to 5 ½" stretched mesh.

- B. Below US Highway 17 bridge

Season: January 1 – March 31

Times: Wednesday noon – Friday midnight

be drift fished between Butler Island and US Hwy 17 bridge in Georgetown County. Nets may be anchored or drift fished. Only one shad net may be drift fished by the occupants of a boat and the net must be attended at all times.

- In salt water, all nets must have international orange buoys attached to each end of the net that are at least 20" in diameter. One of these buoys must have the name and license number of the owner clearly marked on it. On nets longer than 300 feet, an international orange buoy at least 10" in diameter must be attached to the float line every 300 feet. All buoys must be clearly visible at all times.

- In fresh water, all nets must be marked with international orange buoys at least 6" in diameter. There must be a buoy at each end of the net and one buoy attached to the float line every 300 feet. One of the end buoys must have the name and license number of the owner clearly marked on it and all buoys must be clearly visible at all times.

- No shad or herring net, including cables, lines or attached devices, may extend more than ½ of the river, stream, or water course, regardless of tide or river stage.

- No net may be fished within 600 feet of a previously deployed net. No net may be placed or set within 75 feet of the confluence of any tributary.

- Nets must be removed from the water during closed times. Anchors with attached lines and

## SHAD - continued

### Ashepoo River

Season: February 1 – March 31  
Times: Friday noon – Saturday noon

### Combahee River

A. All tributaries except main stems of Salkehatchie Rivers

Season: No open season

B. Remainder of Combahee River, including main stems of Salkehatchie Rivers

Season: January 15 – March 31

Times: Set nets: Tuesday noon – Thursday noon  
Drift nets: Monday noon – Saturday noon

**Coosawhatchie River** - no open season

**Savannah River** – only applies to South Carolina portions

A. New Savannah Bluff Lock & Dam to confluence with Spirit Creek – no open season

B. Main river above Interstate 95 bridge

Season: January 1 – April 15

Times: Wednesday 7AM – Saturday 7 PM

C. Tributaries above Interstate 95 bridge – no open season

D. Seaward of Interstate 95 bridge

Season: January 1 – March 31 except no netting allowed in Savannah's Back River and the north channel of Savannah River downstream from New Savannah Cut

Times: Wednesday 7AM – Saturday 7 PM

### Atlantic Ocean

Season: February 1 – March 31

Times: Tuesday 7 AM – Saturday 7 PM

Methods: Drift nets only and no nets may be fished within 3 nautical miles of the Winyah Bay jetties

**Lake Moultrie, Lake Marion, Diversion Canal, Intake Canal of Rediversion Canal** – no closed season, no time restrictions, may only use cast net, lift net, or hook and line and a daily limit of 250 pounds of herring and shad combined is in effect. For hook and line, there is a daily limit of 10 shad per person per day.

buoys may remain in the water during weekly closed periods. All leads, cables, anchors, signs and buoys must be removed no

later than 3 days after the close of the season.



## Commercial Seasons and Times

### Herring

**Winyah Bay system** - includes Black River, Sampit River, Great Pee Dee, Little Pee Dee, Lynches River, Waccamaw River & Winyah Bay

Season: February 15 – April 15

Times: Wednesday 7 AM – Saturday 7 PM

**Santee River** - includes Rediversion Canal below St. Stephen Dam, North Santee River and Bay, and South Santee River

A. Rediversion Canal

Season: March 1 – April 30

Times: 7 PM – 12 PM EST, 8 PM – 12 PM DST

Methods: Circular drop nets up to 6 feet in diameter, lift nets and cast nets

Nets must be hand operated, no trawling, no culling

All fish except those for live bait must be containerized in up to 100 pound units before landing

No fishing within 100 feet of fish lift exit channel at St. Stephen Powerhouse except with hook and line from March 1 – April 15.

Catch limit: 10 US bushels per boat per day. No harvest may be transferred between boats.

B. Remainder of Santee system: no open season

**Charleston Harbor** – includes Wando River & Cooper River to US Highway 17 bridges, Charleston Harbor, and Ashley River

A. Tailrace Canal from CSX Railroad bridge to Jefferies Power Plant Sanctuary line

Season: March 1 – April 30

Times: Locally published sunrise – 10 PM

Methods: Circular drop nets up to 6 feet in diameter, lift nets and cast nets

Nets must be hand operated, no trawling, no culling

All fish except those for live bait must be containerized in up to 100 pound units before landing

Catch limit: 10 US bushels per boat per day. No harvest may be transferred between boats.

B. Cooper River from CSX Railroad bridge to US Highway 17 – no open season

C. Remainder of Charleston Harbor system

Season: February 15 – April 15

Times: No restrictions

**Lake Moultrie, Lake Marion, Diversion Canal, Intake Canal of Rediversion Canal** – no closed season, no time restrictions, may use cast nets, lift nets, and hook and line. Limit of 250 pounds per boat per day of shad and herring combined.

**Lake Jocassee** – no closed season, no time restrictions, hook and line only

**Lake Keowee** – no closed season, no time restrictions, cast net and hook and line only

**Lake Hartwell** – no closed season, no time restrictions, cast net and hook and line only

**Lake Richard B. Russell** - no closed season, no time restrictions, cast net and hook and line only

**Lake J. Strom Thurmond** - no closed season, no time restrictions, cast net and hook and line only

**Lake Secession, Stevens Creek Reservoir** - no closed season, no time restrictions, cast net and hook and line only

**Lake Greenwood, Lake Murray, Saluda River between Buzzards Roost and SC Highway 121** - no closed season, no time restrictions, cast net and hook and line only

**Catawba River impoundments including Lake Wylie and Lake Wateree** - no closed season, no time restrictions, cast net and hook and line only

**Lake Monticello** - no closed season, no time restrictions, hook and line only

# Miscellaneous Saltwater Fisheries

## In South Carolina

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### Eels

- Licensed saltwater or freshwater commercial fishermen may take eels only with a permit from the Department.
- Permits may be limited in number and may restrict seasons, catch and size limits, hours, areas, or fishing methods. Reporting requirements may be specified.

### Sturgeon

- It is illegal to take, possess, buy, sell or ship shortnose sturgeon which is an endangered species. Any shortnose sturgeon taken incidentally must be returned immediately to the water unharmed.
- Atlantic Sturgeon – no open season and incidentally caught fish must be returned immediately to the water unharmed.

### Diamondback Terrapin

- Diamondback terrapin may be harvested and marketed only with a permit from the Department.
- Permits may restrict seasons, size and catch limits, areas, fishing times and equipment.

### Wild Live Rock & Sargassum

- It is illegal to take wild live rock from state waters for sale or trade. Wild live rock may be taken for scientific or educational purposes under permit from the Department. Permits may be issued for culture of live rock.
- It is illegal to harvest, possess, or sell *Sargassum*.

### Horseshoe Crabs

- It is illegal to take horseshoe crabs except under permit from the Department.
- Permits may restrict fishing areas, fishing methods, size limits, and fishing times. Reporting requirements may be designated.
- Horseshoe crabs may only be collected for bleeding and must be held in Department-approved facilities and returned immediately to water of comparable salinity and water quality after bleeding.
- No horseshoe crab collected in South Carolina may be removed from the state.

### Whelks

- It is illegal to take, possess, sell, or purchase living whelks less than a size set by the Department but not less than 4" in maximum dimension.
- The Department may grant permits to licensed commercial saltwater fishermen to trawl for whelks in the General Trawling Zone. Permits may be limited and may restrict fishing times, areas, catch limits, and size limits. Reporting requirements may be specified.

# Saltwater Dealers

## In South Carolina

### Wholesale Dealers

A wholesale dealer license is required of any person or business that buys, receives, or handles any saltwater fish or products taken or landed in South Carolina and packs, processes, ships, consigns, or sells those items at other than retail or for bait. Each location must be a permanent, non-mobile establishment and must be licensed separately. The original or a legible copy of the wholesale dealer license must be displayed where saltwater fishery products are offered for sale. Every wholesale dealer must keep and retain accurate records detailing information required by the Department for one year and shall open those records for inspection upon reasonable demand.

A person or business that buys or receives product solely from a licensed wholesale dealer does not have to have a wholesale dealer license. Roadside vendors, transient dealers, or peddlers who sell saltwater fishery products are retail dealers and must comply with state and local retail license and tax requirements. These persons must either be a wholesale dealer or have received their product from a licensed wholesale dealer or retail operation. Dated bills of lading, invoices, or bills of sale and the name of the wholesale dealer from whom the product was bought must be in possession of the vendor if he is not a licensed wholesale dealer.

Persons or businesses that produce product reared as offspring from broodstock in captivity (mariculture) or purchase only such product do not have to have a wholesale dealer license.

### Bait Dealers

A bait dealer license is required of any person or business that takes, lands, sells, or trades saltwater fish or products for bait. A licensed bait dealer who only sells product for bait does not have to acquire a wholesale dealer license.

### Peeler Crab Operations

To shed peeler crabs, a person or business must first be a licensed wholesale dealer. He must also be licensed for peeler crabs (see pages 2 - 3).

### Mariculture

- All mariculture operations may operate only under permit from the Department.
- Licensed wholesale dealers may sell saltwater gamefish or other fish for which there are size or possession limits grown in permitted mariculture operations under permit from the Department. Fish must be marked and identified as mariculture product and each lot or shipment must be accompanied by a bill of sale, bill of lading, or proof of origin.

# TED & BRD Requirements

## for trawls in South Carolina

### Turtle Excluder Devices (TED)

**Soft TED:** Only “Parker” TED is legal. **Leatherback rule requires enlarging escape hole to 96”.**

**Hard TED:** Must be 30” X 30” with a 35” X 12” escape hole. The flap cannot extend past the bars of the TED. Floats are required on bottom-shooting TEDs. No TEDs are required for hand retrieved nets (no winch, block, or pulley may be on board) but the following tow times must be observed:

<b>April 1 – Oct 1</b>	<b>55 minutes</b>
<b>Nov 1 – March 31</b>	<b>75 minutes</b>

**Leatherback rule requires enlarging hole to 83” X 26” and sewing on a larger flap which may extend 24” past the bars on the hard TED.**

### Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRD)

**Fisheyes:** Openings must be 18 square inches and constructed of 3/8” steel or heavy duty aluminum rod. For square fisheyes, sides must be 4 1/4” and for oval fisheyes, openings must be 4 1/4” X 9”. Fisheyes must be sewn in no higher than 70% of the bag length up from the bag ties.

**Expanded Mesh Extended Funnel:** Legal. Contact NMFS for details.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL:**

**NMFS (727) 570-5312**

**OR**

**NMFS Harvesting Branch Office (228) 762-4591**